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Americanization

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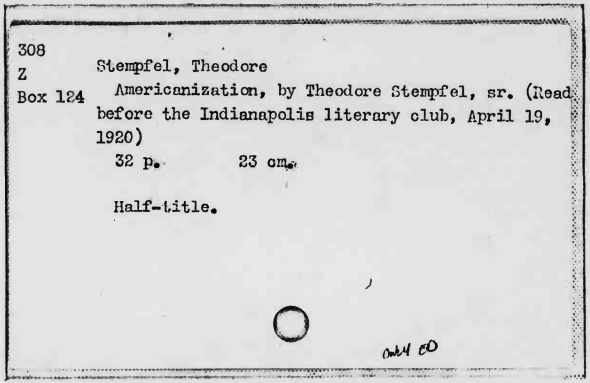

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Americanization

BY THEODORE STEMPFEL, SR.

(Read before the Indianapolis Literary Club, April 19, 1920)

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War's Aftermath

The time is out of joint. The dreadful war not only has maimed and destroyed human life and dissipated property, it has also uprooted the social and economic order. For years to come it has impaired the happiness of the human race, the joy of living, and has carried grief and heartache to every corner of the globe. It has poisoned the mind and hardened the soul of mankind. It has cast suspicion between neighbors, disrupted friendships of long standing, and even torn asunder family ties. It has anew demonstrated man's inhumanity to man, and made us stand aghast at the intensity of hatred slumbering in the human breast. It has brought forth gallant heroes and revealed craven cowards. It has given men of dubious character the opportunity of covering their tarnished past under the glittering cloak of noisy patriotism. It has afforded a welcome chance to the anonymous letter writer, who did not dare to fight with open vizor.

The war has treated men of mature judgment and intellect as children, by removing from the shelves of public libraries, as unfit reading matter, books like Bertrand Russell's "Justice in Wartime." It has forced men of letters—like Romain Rolland, Herman Hesse and others into exile in Switzerland.

It has created untold wealth and abject poverty. It has awakened the most noble and sublime, as well as the most base and brutal instincts in man. It has—thank God—forever swept away kings and emperors "by the grace of God," and

erected governments that Proudhon dreamed of eighty years ago. It has restricted civic freedom, encroached upon personal liberty, and concentrated in the hands of a few powerful weapons of government.

In the crisis of war, such infringements may seem necessary. To be unhampered at the front, a warring nation must not temporize with means to enforce unity of action at home. The heat of passion must be kept aflame, even at the expense of truth. The government must be stern, uncompromising and relentless, without patience for the wavering and half-hearted. Under the iron heel of Mars, all those are crushed who do not keep pace with his impetuous energy and determination.

What does it matter if mistakes are made, if money is expended with extravagance, if shrewd schemers fill their pockets at home, if human life is needlessly sacrificed in battle? There is no time to think, there is no time to pause, the will to win is ever uppermost, and other trifles must wait until some future time.

But war must come to end, and then its aftermath brings new and unforeseen problems. Disenchantment follows exaltation. The heat of passion is chilled by the coolness of reason. There is a towering of enormous figures as the cost is being counted. The empty treasury of the state must be replenished by increased taxation. Industry converted to the purposes of war must readjust itself to the demands of peace. Soldiers returning to civil life must find employment, the disabled must be provided for.

Problem of Reconstruction

Victor and vanquished alike are confronted with the serious problem of reconstruction. The cost of life's necessities rises by leaps and bounds. The purchase power of money declines in

proportion, and the profiteer thrives and multiplies in the fertile soil. Labor, in self-protection, conscious of its power, extorts higher wages, adding new complications to the economic dilemma. People become restless, irritable, dissatisfied and disunited. The spirit of political bias and partisanship rises in their midst. Such have been, more or less, the logical consequences of war in modern times.

The World War, having reached larger dimensions than the combined wars of centuries, has intensified in the same proportion the task of rebuilding the economic structure of society. The world has lost its equilibrium.

The Russian people have shaken off the yoke of the Romanoffs. It needed a world war to make this possible; it needed defeat of the imperial army to accomplish this. The same factors that struck down the Russian dynasty were essential to the liberation of the German people from Hohenzollern rule. For in normal times it would be foolhardy for a people to revolt against a highly centralized government, supported by a large standing army, and radiating its influence into every branch of civil life. The spirit of the Russian revolution can not be banished any more. It gathered new strength under the attack by foreign armies. The most recent and most drastic weapon of advanced civilization, starvation by blockade, has been of no avail. Whether we sympathize with this spectral phenomenon or not is of no consequence. We must stare facts in the face and find an answer to the question whether this strange, uncanny movement is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Karl Marx. In 1842 he wrote:

"The new revolution will be introduced by philosophy. But philosophy can not work a revolution without material weapons, and it will find its material weapons in the proletariat. . . . When it rises in its strength it will be irresitible, and the

revolution which it will accomplish will be the only one, known to history, that is not utopian. Other revolutions have been partial, wrought by a class in the interest of a class, but this one will be a universal and uniform revolution, effected in the name of all society; for the proletariat is a class which possesses a universal character, because it dissolves all other separate classes in itself. It is the only class that takes its stand on a human, and not on a historical title. Its very sorrows and grievances have nothing special or relative in them; they are the broad sorrows and grievances of humanity."

Need of Far-seeing Leadership

It will require far-seeing leadership and courageous action to restore normal economic and mental conditions after the convulsions of the World War.

"A reconstruction of society is necessarily a most extensive program." (I am quoting from John Rae's "Contemporary Socialism.") "It allows room for the utmost variety of opinion and plan. The longer it is discussed, the more certainly do differences arise, and the movement becomes a strife of schools in no way formidable to the government. All this only furnishes another reason for the conclusion that in dealing with socialist agitations, a government's safest, as well as justest, policy is, as much as may be, to leave them alone. Their danger lies in the cloudiness of their ideas, and that can only be dispersed in the free breezes of popular discussion. The sword is an idle method of reasoning with an idea; an idea will eventually yield to nothing but argument. Repression, too, is absolutely impossible with modern facilities of inter-communication, and can at best but drive the offensive elements for a time into subterranean channels, where they gather like a dangerous chokedamp, that may occasion at any moment a serious explosion."

Compared with the dismal misery and black despair prevailing in Central and Balkanized Europe, compared with the nervous apprehension pervading one nation after having driven its once powerful neighboring state to the very limit of human misery and endurance, compared with the high tension of another nation, lest the ever-gnawing red mole of Russia weaken the pillars of the Empire, compared with all the firebrands smoldering in the soil of Europe—the gravity of our own problems seems to dwindle.

Before pandemonium broke loose in Europe, we had been pursuing a care-free existence, quite happily blended with agitated experiments in protective tariffs—tariffs for revenue only—and free trade, in gold standard, bimetallism and free silver, in trust building and trust busting, in wet and dry excitements, in unrestricted and restricted immigration, and other issues that may have pleased the fancy of political party leaders. Our body politic was robust and elastic enough to withstand such violent reform cures. Any other nation would have collapsed under the unskilled knife of political surgeons.

But the war has changed our character as a nation profoundly. We have become meekly accustomed to paternalism. Some of our sacred and inherent rights—among them the freedom of speech and of the press—have undergone undreamed of limitations and restrictions. We have become oversensitive and timid under the espionage law; we have tempered and subdued the erstwhile refreshing and typically American spirit of "don't-care-for-anybody," at times adorned with a still more emphatic figure of speech. We have been told, only recently, that the constitution never intended to protect our personal liberty. On many occasions we have withheld our opinions for

fear of being called "pro-German," or "Bolshevistic," or lest we should measure below par in the mathematical calculation of citizenship. The war has coined new words and definitions. One of these, generally current at this time, and often spoken of as if it were a sudden revelation, is "Americanization." I confess, frankly, at this point, that having been born on foreign soil I feel constrained in discussing the problem, notwithstanding the fact that after having gone through the process of evolution myself, I should have some knowledge of the subject.

Americanization, the process of assimilating to the customs and institutions of the United States, has heretofore been understood to mean the gradual and voluntary adaptation by the immigrant to the social, commercial, economic and political life of America.

The Meaning of "Americanization"

As the result of the war, the definition of Americanization has undergone a change. Instead of being a natural development from within, it is to be inculcated from without. The immigrant, woefully neglected in the past, quite often treated as a human being of the lower order, suddenly finds himself the center of attraction. He is to be Americanized in the most speedy manner; he is to be taught the English language in a minimum space of time, by persuasion, if possible; by coercion, if necessary. He is expected to forget the old home across the sea, the language in which his mother sang at his cradle; he is to be transformed into an American by the same methods that the military drill-master uses in making soldiers of unsophisticated farmer boys.

Americanization has almost become a newly discovered science, or is it a fad? We even speak in all soberness of chang-

ing our school system for the purpose of a more intense Americanization. Could it be possible that our system of educating our children has been inadequate and faulty; that we have neglected the fundamental principle of every school—that of rearing useful and loyal citizens? And all this agitation, notwithstanding the fact that no nation engaged in the World War has been represented by a finer body of men and demonstrated a nobler spirit of patriotism, a more unselfish eagerness to be of service to mankind than the American nation, recruiting its citizens from all parts of the world?

The process of Americanization is slow and gradual. It will be accelerated or retarded in proportion to the degree of education and intelligence of the immigrant, in proportion to his talent of assimilation and his ability to acquire the knowledge of the English language, and lastly, in proportion to the treatment he receives on the part of the native American.

For the thinking immigrant the transformation into an American is the result of an inner struggle, in comparing, weighing and contrasting the advantages and disadvantages of his old and his new home. This is but a natural mental process both for the European in America and for the American in Europe.

Impressions of childhood are not as easily changed and laid aside as one changes his coat. At the death of Andrew Carnegie, who certainly may be ranked among the most useful American citizens of foreign birth, the American press, eulogizing him, directed particular attention to the fact that "he retained to the last his love for Scotland, where he maintained Skibo castle and used millions for philanthropic enterprises."

It need not be denied, however, that for some foreign born this inner struggle never culminates in a decisive conclusion.

It is not the purpose of this paper to give, in the short space allotted to me for the test of your patience, a minute description of the conglomeration of races and nationalities arriving in the land of unlimited possibilities, with hopes and expectations for better future days. I shall not try to differentiate between Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbians, Rumanians, Hungarians, Slovaks, Bohemians and Czechs, Turks, Armenians and Syrians, Russians, Poles and Ruthenians, Italians and Socilians, commonly classified as "Hunyaks" and "Dagos." I shall, therefore, use the collective name of Southern Europeans, and in a general way confine myself to such foreigners, whom I have known through personal acquaintance and contact.

Treatment of Immigrants

Let us follow a group of immigrants from the moment their steamer comes in sight of the Statute of Liberty bidding them a hopeful welcome in the New World. They stand in line on the lower deck, with their bulging bags and bundles, ready for disembarkation at Ellis Island, sometimes called the "Isle of Tears." (Of course I am speaking of prewar times. I do not know the conditions existing today.) On their arrival at the island, the immigrants are examined, and if found in good physical condition and in possession of the required sum of money, they are taken in hand and tagged by an agent of the steamship company, whose only interest in them is to get them quickly beyond the gates of Ellis Island to save his company the possible expense of deporting any rejected immigrant. As designated on their tags, the newcomers are transported to specified "hotels" or lodging houses in which, in all probability, the steamship company itself, or quite likely some of its officials are interested to the extent of a rake-off of so much per head on the price paid for board and lodging.

No sympathetic hand is found to direct those confused strangers in this cold, new land. The only ones who seem to take a passing spiritual interest in them are the voluntary distributors of religious tracts. But what the immigrant needs is advice and practical help of an earthly, rather than a spiritual nature.

Shortly after the immigrant is lodged in his boarding house, the employment agent comes around, and for a consideration of one or several weeks' wages, proposes to find the job for him that in all probability had been definitely contracted for while the particular immigrant was still in mid-ocean. This the immigrant does not know. Nor does he know that at the time when he received in his old home a letter from one of his countrymen in America, urging him to come over, even then his services may have been guaranteed "sub rosa" on this side to some large corporation.

No doubt a good many Southern Europeans leave their native land for the sole purpose of earning enough money within a few years of hard work to afford them a better livelihood upon their return home. At the time of their departure for America they are not inspired with lofty political ideals or interested in American institutions of government. The voice of freedom has not called to them from beyond the Atlantic. Quite likely there has been a letter from some friend or acquaintance to the folks at home, pointing out how hundreds of dinars, drachmas, kronen or lires may be earned each week in America, whereas in the old home such sums could not be earned in many months.

And furthermore, that letter may have brought the alluring news that in America meat is served with every meal, while in

the old country the daily menu consists of potatoes or rice. Meat is considered a luxury there.

But let us return to the lodging house, where we now find the money shark busily engaged in exchanging the money the immigrant brought along for American money, at a liberal discount.

After the immigration commissioner, the steamship agent, the boarding house keeper, the employment agent and the money changer are through with him, the immigrant is turned loose in that large, strange metropolis, with its bewildering street traffic and its huge, awe-inspiring buildings.

Another group of immigrants is taken from the lodging house to the train and shipped in the most unceremonious fashion into the interior, to Pittsburgh, Chicago, Gary or other industrial centers. On arrival at their destination, the employment agent looms up again, and after making sure of his fee, just like his colleague in the East, he finds jobs for them in steel mills, foundries, packing houses and other industries requiring hard manual labor.

The Exploited Immigrant

In the hustle and bustle of American business life it can not be expected that immigrants coming from far lands and not knowing a syllable of the English language should be accorded a special reception, but as a matter of self-protection, there ought to be some official agency leading them into the proper channels of our economic and social life, instead of leaving them entirely to the mercy of the schemer and exploiter.

There are in our own city, as in all other industrial cities, settlements of foreigners from Eastern and Southern Europe, working as common laborers wherever strong muscles are in demand. Italians and Greeks prefer employment in commission houses or as bootblacks or street peddlers. These foreigners live huddled together in lodging houses in as primitive a manner as the regulations of the Board of Health will tolerate.

Through the Foreign Department, which I organized eighteen years ago in the bank with which I am connected (I ask your indulgence for speaking now and then in the first person) I came in contact with a large number of these "Hunyaks" and "Dagos." Despite their rusty appearance and deplorable lack of cleanliness, I became interested in them. They were always visibly grateful for a friendly greeting, and as soon as they felt themselves in safe hands, they came in droves to buy checks for the folks in the old home.

After the immigrants have gradually acquired the harsher and quicker tempo of American industrial activity, they are approached through their leaders by two distinct types of citizens of our public life: (1) the walking delegate and (2) the ward politician. They are given to understand that by joining the labor union they will be taken care of and obtain higher wages for shorter hours of work. Who can blame them for trying to improve their living conditions? What the politician promises can only be surmised because he prefers to speak in a whisper. But we know his eagerness in lining up the "Hunyak" vote and we also know that party managers have in the past been always ready to procure, free of charge, the first naturalization paper for the much despised foreigners, giving them the right to vote. To use foreigners, ignorant of American institutions of government, as "voting cattle" is one of the most serious crimes against American citizenship.

In my conversations with Southern Europeans, I was especially interested to learn from them by what means they had gained a livelihood in the old country. In the majority of cases their answer was that they were working "on the land." They

were farm laborers. Some of them had owned small farms. Agriculture is the principal occupation of the peoples of Southern Europe. Their economic life is chiefly dependent upon the products of the soil. Farming in Southern European states, with the possible exception of Rumania, is in the most primitive state of development. Little is done for the cultivation of the soil. The farmers there follow the methods of their parents, just as they had been handed down to them in their younger days. The farms are small, compared with American farms, the implements used are of the most ancient pattern. Ill fed, decrepit animals supply the motive power. Not infrequently a human being, sometimes a woman, is hitched to the plow together with an animal.

The increasing strenuous work yields only a meager existence. Those people of the South certainly earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brows. They are hard working and thrifty people, who make no immodest demands on life. Although their income is small, some manage to lay aside a modest little sum for a rainy day, or for a trip to America.

At the time of their arrival at Ellis Island, many of these immigrants are financially able to make a good start, if given proper and reliable assistance. They are strong and sturdy men, willing to work. They would gladly settle with their families on farms, but they are afraid of being cheated out of their savings. So they work out their lives in factories and foundries, while the evils of the cities may lead their sons and daughters to ruin, and often to crime. Why should not a serious effort be made to divert numbers of them, especially those with families, to the country, instead of thoughtlessly massing them in industrial centers, where, under unscrupulous leadership, they may become a positive danger in times of economic upheaval?

Helpful Instruction of Foreigners

I can conceive of an organization, say in connection with a university or an agricultural college, having as its object the instruction of these foreigners, either in their own language, or by means of motion pictures, in the use of modern farm tools and machinery, and in the art of cultivating the soil. On a trip through Western states one may observe rich fields, truck farms and gardens with flowers, berries and orange trees directly adjoining strips of desert land with sage brush and cactus trees. Immense areas of desert land could be converted into fertile soil by irrigation and cultivation. Such conversion would produce wealth, contentment and happiness, and proportionally reduce the high cost of living.

The railroads are vitally interested in colonizing the West. They have spent large sums without tangible results in inducing people to move "back to the farm." The main reason for the comparatively small progress made in that direction seems to be lack of assistance for the small farmer. Supposing our government, which has recently even defined one-half of one per cent as the dividing line between a decent citizen and an outlaw, would undertake some constructive work in causing the formation of a company, international in scope, philanthropic in spirit, and at the same time remunerative in character, for the purpose of protecting the immigrants in all financial matters from the day of their arrival at Ellis Island? How much good could be accomplished! With what little effort could they be won over, if they were made to feel that they were in safe hands, and that the authorities of their new country were taking a watchful interest in their material welfare! Some of them might be induced to invest the small capital they brought along in productive farm land in the West. Under a lease contract only a small initial payment would be necessary. The

balance of the purchase money could be made payable on an amortization plan for a period of twenty-five to fifty years, combining therewith, as additional security, a life insurance policy, in favor of the lessor, for the amount of the unpaid purchase money. Other expenses, such as taxes, irrigation rentals and premiums on other insurance, deemed advisable to safeguard the investment, could be included in the payment plan, arranged in easy installments and maturing at a time when farmers can realize on their products. The co-operation of railroads and insurance companies could be secured without difficulty.

Good crops obtained through expert advice in cultivation would enable the foreigners to build up a home for their families; their example would encourage others to do likewise; they would feel everlastingly grateful for the assistance given them through the agency of the government. Many a foreigner would be drawn away from industrial centers with their sinister influence. He would perhaps unwittingly Americanize himself and save us the trouble of Americanizing him by compulsion. But let us turn from this vague and perhaps utopian picture of future possibilities to the grim reality of the present.

Living Conditions of Foreigners

In traveling through any part of this country one may notice on sidetracks long strings of miserable, antiquated box cars, assigned as homes to foreigners while they are working on roadbeds. Is it not quite natural that once in a while they should compare their own lot in life with that of the occupants of the passing train, who seem so comfortably seated in the Pullman or buffet car? Or in taking a stroll through the foreign settlement of a large manufacturing town, one may ob-

serve without much effort the unhealthy conditions under which these foreigners are living in their crowded quarters.

Or let us hear a short paragraph from the official report of the late Carleton H. Parker, who in 1914 had been appointed by the Federal Government to investigate the Wheatland hop-pickers riot in California:

"Twenty-eight hundred pickers," Parker writes, "were camped on a treeless hill, which was part of the ranch owned by the largest single employer of agricultural labor in the state. Some were in tents, some in topless squares of sacking, or with piles of straw. There was no organization for sanitation, no garbage disposal. The temperature during the week of the riot had remained near 105 and though the wells were a mile from where the men, women and children were picking, and their bags could not be left for fear of theft of the hops, no water was sent into the fields. A lemonade wagon appeared at the end of the week, later found to be a concession granted to a cousin of the ranch owner. Local Wheatland stores were forbidden to send delivery wagons to the camp grounds. It developed in the state investigation that the owner of the ranch received half of the net profits earned by an alleged independent grocery store, which had been granted the 'grocery concession' and was located in the center of the camp grounds. . . ."

Royal Dixon, special lecturer for the Board of Education of New York City, reprints in his book on Americanization, published last year by the Macmillan Co., the following description by a foreigner of a labor camp: "Where the padrone, an agent of capital, controls the alien workers, the padrone, by false promises, entices the immigrants from the larger cities to the labor camps. When the aliens arrive they are placed under actual conditions of peonage. They are housed in an old shack with no light, no ventilation. Their food is stale and unwhole-

some. They dare not rebel, as armed guards and yelping bloodhounds keep watch. . . . They can not appeal to law, as the company owns the courts and controls the police, but even if the state does intervene, the aliens are shown to be in debt to the employers. Their outraged souls are stirred by the knowledge of wrong. They do not live in America, but under it, in the cellars, in the hovels, in the dark, in the damp.

"Thus it is in the mines, in the sweatshops, in the labor camps, the immigrants are exploited, outraged. How appalling is this policy when nineteen out of every twenty workers in mines and factories are foreign born! You realize that it is the immigrants who bear the brunt of exploitation. You realize that it is the immigrants who are the victims of industrial injustice, who were massacred at Ludlow, whose lives were snuffed out in the Illinois mine disasters, who were burned in the Triangle factory fire. These immigrants, by their faithful toil in the field of industry—in the mines, in the tunnel, in the shop—earn not your honor, but your indifference, your hatred, your exploitation!"

In the Atlantic Monthly of last month, John Kulamer, a lawyer of Czecho-Slovakian origin, writes:

"The foreigner is very seldom called by his name—he is always referred to as "Hunkie," or "Dago," or the like; he is made on all sides to feel that he is despised, that he is a stranger and unwelcome. His children are discriminated against, no matter how hard he tries to bring them up according to the American standard. To bring this home: Several times my little girl asked me: 'Daddy, why does Jennie call me a 'hunkie'? It hurts, and not everybody can take such matters philosophically, especially when he knows his child is as good as, if not better than, the other."

Foreign Labor and Strikes

During the recent strike in the steel industry, there was in the press of the country a concerted outcry against foreign labor. If there were no foreigners, the papers said, there would be no labor troubles. That may be true. But if it were not for foreign labor, the steel industry would never have developed on the immense scale existing today.

The leaders of the strike were neither "Hunyaks" nor "Dagos," they were native Americans. If the rank and file of the strikers believe, or were made to believe, that they were fighting for their rights, it was not because they were foreigners, but because they were human beings. Their demands may have been unreasonable and extravagant, but the assertion may not miss the mark very far that originally their employers preferred them to native Americans, because they were *foreigners* and willing to work longer hours for smaller wages.

One need not be a labor unionist, nor a socialist or communist, nor a menshevist, bolshevist or spartacist to recognize and deeply deplore the injustice and unfairness usually practiced in the treatment of foreigners.

The habit of the Southern Europeans of sending their hard-earned savings abroad has often been advanced as one of the many reasons for their undesirability as members of the American commonwealth, but a man who is taking care of an old mother or father 3,500 miles away must be good at heart. One should also take into consideration that the economic values these foreigners have produced by their toil are far in excess of the sum represented by the checks they are sending to their native land. The many millions carried over to Europe every year by our leisure class may not always represent economic values actually produced by the spender.

Foreign labor has become an economic necessity. A large number of our industries are depending on it. In the construction of the New York subway system, 71 per cent of the laborers employed were Southern Europeans, and it is universally admitted that the work of these despised foreigners was of immense benefit to the war industries. Traveling through Middle and Western Europe—I am speaking of pre-war times—one could see this same type of men at work in constructing and repairing railroad tracks. They were not eligible to citizenship. In Germany, for instance, they were not permitted to stay longer than two consecutive years. However, after the lapse of one year they could return for another period of two years. But they were not compelled to live in dilapidated box cars, their housing conditions were far superior to the quarters assigned to them in this country.

The assimilation of Southern Europeans, especially those without families and children, can not be accomplished within a short space of time, because their conception of life is so entirely different from the American point of view; their native language is so radically at variance with the English language, from the first letter of the alphabet to the construction of the most simple sentence. The schooling they received in their early youth is scanty and primitive. Historical figures like Washington and Lincoln, and the cause they stand for, are beyond their comprehension, because the history of their native land is an endless chain of religious and racial struggles, instigated by landgrabbing czars, sultans and emperors. That history seems now to continue its bloody course under new government, hurriedly patched together under the peace treaty. The Balkan has always been the powder barrel of Europe, and the Big Four at Versailles succeeded in adding new inflammable material for future explosions.

Americanization Through Foreign-Language Press

The foreigners in our country can best be reached by men of their own race and by newspapers printed in their own language. It should, therefore, be the aim of any comprehensive plan of Americanization to keep in touch with the more advanced leaders of the different racial groups. If they are honest and reliable, they will accomplish infinitely more by instructing their countrymen in their native tongue than the most eloquent orator, who can only express himself in English. The editorials in their papers can be supervised, if need be. It seems folly to suppress them because they are printed in a foreign language. This would deprive the Americanization movement of the very best medium of influencing and directing the mind of the foreigner towards true Americanism.

Night schools for instruction in English and civics may do much good, but their efficiency is often largely overestimated. The teaching of English to foreigners seems to many well-meaning men and women the most important part of the Americanization program. "We must teach those foreigners to speak and think in English," said one of the delegates at an Americanization conference held in Philadelphia last year. That gentleman has unquestionably never made the slightest attempt himself to learn a foreign language, otherwise he would have realized that an intimate knowledge of a language is essential in order to be able to think in it. One may also read understandingly a foreign language without being able to speak it. It seems almost inhuman to expect a foreigner to be in the proper frame of mind for English lessons at a night school after a day of tiresome manual work in a steel mill or a slaughter house, or on a traction road. But we are an impatient people, and like to collect quick dividends on the invest-

ment of our energy. We are not methodical and may, therefore, quite often unintentionally demand the impossible.

With the advancing years the mind loses its flexibility, and the study of a foreign language becomes more difficult even for a man of good schooling. Language, in a certain sense, is a matter of instinct. One may write and converse to perfection in two languages, but almost unconsciously one will at times revert to the language first heard in the kindergarten. Certain shades of expression peculiar to one language are untranslatable into another language. Even Carl Schurz, who had full command of the English language, wrote that part of his autobiography relating to his early youth, in German, and had it translated by a friend.

The task of converting Southern Europeans into true American citizens, after restricting them in the use of their native tongue, and depriving them of their newspapers, as has been repeatedly proposed, seems like trying to fill the vessel of the Danaides with water.

The legislature of the state of Oregon recently went to the very extreme by passing a law forbidding the circulation, by mail or in person, of any book, paper pamphlet or letter published in a foreign language, unless accompanied by an English translation printed parallel with the foreign text. Not only belletristic, but also all scientific books are forbidden fruit for the Oregonian if they are printed in a foreign language. In the book of Horace Bridges on "Becoming an American," doubt is expressed whether a member of the Catholic church, being directed from Rome, can ever become a true American! Should this country, the hope of the world, surround itself with the proverbial Chinese wall? Would we profit by clamping down the lid at Ellis Island? Would our life as a nation be

enriched if we held ourselves aloof from the personal contact with other races?

The Test of the True American

And after all, does the knowledge of the English language alone make a true American? Is the accident of birth the true starting point in measuring the value of true citizenship?

Is the father of an unbroken line of Mayflower ancestors, who satisfies the vanity of his daughter by opening his swollen purse for the purchase of an empty title of an European princeling, a better American than the obscure immigrant who speaks broken English, but has a distinct feeling for the fundamental truth emanating from the Declaration of Independence?

Every man of education ought to know a foreign language, at least to the extent of being able to read it. It seems an offense against the principle of education if parents, who next to English command another language, neglect the opportunity of instructing their children in that second language, which they can acquire without much effort.

I know Americans of German descent who pride themselves on being unable to speak or understand German, but from the standpoint of education, not of war expediency, I doubt very much whether that is an accomplishment worthy of self-glorification.

While we were destroying, instead of regulating, if necessary, the teaching of German in our public schools, many of our soldiers over in France, knowing the language, were assisting French school children in learning their German lessons.

In the beginning of this paper, the process of Americanization is described as an inner struggle of the immigrant in contrasting the advantages and disadvantages of his old and his new country. The extent of the transfusion of American ideas

into the mind of the foreigner is often unknown to him, until, after some years of absence, he returns to his old country. Let me quote for illustration a few chapters from the diary of a young German who had left his parental home in a spirit of adventure thirty-seven years ago. He had come to America, not for the purpose of escaping military service, because after serving one year in the army he was honorably discharged; neither had he come with the intention of making money. He merely followed the bewitching call of "Wanderlust," the desire of extracting himself from the dull and narrow suroundings of his native town, and without definite plans for the future—he longed to see the new world. After having experienced seven hard years as a "greenhorn," full of disappointment, homesickness and humiliation on account of his inability to express himself intelligently in English, he visited his old home for a few months. He landed again in New York in July, 1890. His diary reflects the following impressions:

Notes From a Diary

"Under the inspiring tune of the American national hymn our steamer neared the Hoboken pier, welcomed by the lusty cheers of the thickly packed crowd assembled there. How happy were all those of our companions, who were recognized and greeted by relatives and friends. . . .

"After the usual tedious and tiresome waiting the inspection of our baggage was at last finished. There is quite a difference between the easy-going, jovial American official and the stern, dignified officer in green uniform on the other side of the ocean. My preference is the American custom inspector, because he is less efficient and more accommodating. As I stepped from the pier into the street I almost fainted, so intense was the heat, so suffocating the air. The people, the houses, the streets, in short, everything I observed at first glance, looked so dusty, so unclean and dilapidated, that I was longing for the fresh ocean breeze and for the land beyond. Here I stood before the most sober prose in life, the chase after money. There those poor creatures hustled and ran, trying to outdistance each other in spite of the glowing heat. The street crossings were blockaded by a long train of wagons, carts, omnibuses and all sorts of vehicles! The noise in the street was terrific. Everybody seemed to be in a hurry, spurred by the greed for the almighty dollar! I finally arrived at a cheap looking typical Hoboken hotel. Seated in the farthest corner of the dining room, I let my impressions of my whole trip pass in review. During my travels through Germany the superiority of America's political and social institutions and customs became more clear to me, and now after my return to 'God's Country' the many advantages of Germany seemed to allure me. Distance lends enchantment. In that respect we Germans in America are much alike; while the depth of feeling, the love for the arts, for nature, and the serene enjoyment of life awakens in us a silent longing for our native land, we are, nevertheless, captivated by the free, independent spirit, the absence of class distinction, the liberality in business, prevailing in our adopted country. Why, I asked myself, did you leave home? Why did you not return seven years ago, as you first intended? In order to divert such annoying thoughts, I picked up from the table a German periodical, 'Die Gartenlaube,' and carelessly turned the leaves. My attention was attracted to a full page picture entitled: 'The New Court Custom—Die Neue Hoftracht,' showing men in knee breeches. Indignantly I dropped the magazine. Forgotten was the longing for Germany. The wavering feeling vanished in an instant. I re-

gained my balance. America forever! What a pity! Full grown men, the leaders of a nation of 'thinkers and poets' present themselves in knee breeches at the command of an eccentric monarch. Where is that manly pride before the thrones of kings of which Schiller sang? That manly pride is wearing knee breeches, because an ambitious emperor is trying to revive the 'ancient regime' of bygone centuries, the epoch of Frederick the Great.

"Well and good, the experiment may succeed. He may order knee breeches, the cue and the cane, he may find men willing to wear them, and to powder their hair. They may bend their backs most obediently before him and he may imitate the hocus-pocus, the arrogance and frivolity of the Rococo age, which has been blown off the face of the earth by that purifying cyclone of the French Revolution; he may reconstruct the whole machinery of that Punch and Judy show, but, alas! the principal role can not be filled, the role of a Frederick the Great! Instead of a genius, there is now only a braggart —instead of a Frederick the Great, only a second-hand William.

"O, you princeling, you may make speeches and travel; you and the other monarchs, 'by the grace of God,' may exchange Judas kisses and, preparing for war, speak of peace, but the time will come, must come, when the consciousness of the people will awaken; when no emperor nor princeling will succeed in commanding a halt to the avalanche of a freed, democratic spirit. But lo, how disheartening is the present. The nation of thinkers and poets is wearing knee breeches!

"Our train was rolling westward. The day was hot. The contrast was quite significant between my present trip and the one I made through Germany a few weeks before. The whole country had been suffering under a long spell of dry summer heat. Everything looked dusty, disorderly and withered. The grass had turned yellow. As a precaution against fire, the grass was burned off along the railroad track, forming a broad rim of black mourning from East to West.

"Traveling through Germany I was impressed by the beauty of the country. Every inch of ground seemed to show the loving care of an artistic hand. Cheerful orchards, blooming meadows, clean villages, romantic forests, lovely flower gardens, wooded hills with old castles, mementos of past centuries greet the traveler everywhere.

"But here you see for hours and hours, without change, endless fences, fields covered with rotting tree stumps, dilapidated railroad stations. I had to recall to my mind the picture of the knee breeches to regain my composure.

"At last I arrived in Indianapolis. Some of my friends greeted me at the station. I had been away for three months, and, as every traveler does after a long absence, I looked for changes in the streets. I found none. But in the street car I discovered an innovation. It was a new sign, so posted as to catch the eye of every passenger. It read: 'Gentlemen, please do not spit tobacco juice upon the floor of the car.' On the way home I could not keep my eyes off that nauseating sign. but remembering Germany's class distinctions, brass buttons and uniforms, I drank my first toast at home to: 'AMERICA —FOREVER!' "

Qualifications for Citizenship

The author of that diary was at the time fully able to read and write English, but it took years before he attempted to speak the language, because he was constantly self-conscious of his faulty pronunciation. An applicant for citizenship

undergoing before the court the ordeal of an examination may seem in his embarrassment and confusion incapable of expressing himself in correct English, but this does not necessarily prove his unfitness as a citizen. Only recently the application of a foreigner was denied by the court on that ground, and for the additional reason that the applicant was lacking in state pride, because he was ignorant of the startling fact that the vice-president is a product of the Hoosier state. To quote Kulamer, "Language is a very useful means to an end; also is something to which a strong sentiment attaches, but it is a mistake to make language an end, the test of a man's loyalty." The main stress seems to be laid on the teaching of English in the literature on "Americanization," flooding the country during the past five years. One of the best and sanest books on the subject was written by a woman, Frances Alice Kellor. Her book, entitled "Straight America," published in June, 1916, is dedicated to the "President-elect." Miss Kellor's line of thought received special commendation by the late Theodore Roosevelt.

The book is a sort of an "oratio pro domo." The author calls attention to the discrimination against aliens in the different states of the Union, and criticizes the absence of a uniform system of naturalization laws.

"In the matter of standards for citizenship," she says, "the burden of determining the qualifications of prospective citizens rests upon the Bureau of Naturalization. . . . primarily concerned with technicalities of law and proof of residence, placing legal evidence before the judge, and showing that the law has been complied with.

"The actual granting of final papers," she continues, "rests with some 2,380 judges, each applying his own idea of qualification."

In the Yale Review of January, 1919, Miss Kellor contributed an article entitled "What is Americanization," giving, so to speak, the essence of her previous book. I may be permitted to select a few paragraphs of that article to illustrate my own point of view.

"Beyond the slogans of 'a common language and a common citizenship' a program of Americanization has not been accepted. America, the greatest immigration country in the world, has no national domestic policy whatsoever, and no organization as a government for dealing with race assimilation, its most delicate and fundamental problem. Americans like to think in a crude way of this country as a melting pot, with peasants from Ellis Island going in at the top and citizens in American clothing coming out at the bottom. . . .

"Let us face the inevitable truth. There can be no Americanization from the top down or in the mass. It will not come from the court that grants a citizenship certificate, nor from the school that teaches English, nor from the speakers that talk patriotism; nor from the patriotic society that prints platitudes. It will come from basic conditions being right, and none is more vital than industrial relations. It will live as we shorten the distance between the Constitution and the shop. It will be believed in as we square every act in the shops in America with every utterance in public print.

"Industrial Americanization is not, as we sometimes think, welfare work, or the introduction of a few makeshifts to keep men at work. It is the practical operation of the American spirit in management. The man who comes here expecting opportunity, fair remuneration for his day's work, fair working conditions, friendly personal relations, can not be met with limitations and discriminations, and still become Americanized.

Meaning of Americanization

"Americanization having its political roots in political ideals can not be achieved so long as these ideals, as interpreted by the sources of authority in America, mean one thing for the native born, and another for the foreign born; one thing for men and another for women; one thing for employer and another for employes; one thing for the rich and another for the poor; one thing in one state, and another in an adjoining state."

Miss Kellor closes her interesting article with this thought:

"No effective program can be made until we set our own house in order, until we attain the right attitude individually, and until we equip ourselves with the necessary information to give us the right approach to the many races who are among us, but not of us; whose faces, regardless of the high wages, the luxuries and the freedom of America, are set towards the East."

A liberal treatment of prospective citizens of foreign birth, an honest effort in improving their living conditions, a lenient judgment of their faults, an ungrudging appreciation of their good qualities, the reciprocal spirit of give and take, a touch of human kindness, less superciliousness and broader justice will bring about in them a quicker change of heart, a deeper veneration for the land of their choice, a more thorough Americanization, than all police regulations and oratorical feasts, all teachings and admonishings by self-constituted reform societies will ever be able to accomplish.

For the common people of Europe, America has been the shining ray of hope, not only during the last decades, but ever since the first cannon shot at Bunker Hill vibrated through the world. America has been the magic word for all men yearning for liberation from the tyranny of the established church, from

the yoke of political autocracy, from the slavery of industrial servitude, from the oppression of artificial class distinctions.

The Declaration of Independence was the first message of a newer and better world, it clarified the mind of the leaders of the French Revolution, it destroyed the cornerstone of that solid granite block of authority, erected and fortified since the dawn of the Middle Ages upon the ruins of human liberty.

That reverent admiration for America's mission was reinforced and embellished when the name of Abraham Lincoln, the greatest man of the 19th century, was inscribed with golden letters in the book of history.

America the Hope of the World

During the agony of the World War every man, woman and child of Europe looked imploringly to America. From there had come repeated assurances for a better future. America responded liberally and unselfishly. The American soldiers, imbued with that jovial democratic spirit, which is typically American, were welcomed by the people of all lands, and they have no warmer admirers than among the people of the nation which they helped to conquer.

When later on the representative of that great American Nation, on his triumphal voyage to the Paris Peace Conference, emphasized with admirable frankness his country's aims for a just and lasting peace, the hearts of the common people of Europe beat quicker. Their shaken confidence was restored.

And even now, with so many hopes shattered at Versailles, with so many idols broken to pieces through the subtle craftiness of designing Old World diplomacy, the people have not faltered in their belief that America will yet come to their res-

cue, because, as the former Secretary of the Interior, Franklin K. Lane, so eloquently expressed: "America is not the name of so much territory. It is a living spirit. . . . which has purpose and pride and conscience; knows why it wished to live and to what end; knows how it comes to be respected of the world, and hopes to retain that respect by living on with the light of Lincoln's love of man as its old and new testament."

May this living spirit be the guiding star in the solution of the problems of reconstruction confronting the nation, in the amalgamation of diverse racial elements into a common loyalty and allegiance. No better ideal can be found therefor than in the preamble of the Constitution. (I borrow this thought from the Minneapolis Journal.)

"Americanization is the modern attempt to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity. It is a program as imperative today as when our forefathers announced it."

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